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After the end of state socialism, capitalism has turned the well-known Marxist metaphor of the undertaker into its opposite and integrated it into its own ideological repertoire. But, in claiming to bury the Marxian Theory once again, the official academic sciences certainly have the wrong body. Marx's work represents, according to its actual meaning, a negative theory of breakdown rather than a positive theory of "socialist development," though it had been exploited for the legitimation by the bureaucratic dictatorships of state socialism. Hence, the Marxian logical and analytical framework is the theoretical projection of capitalism and its development up to its mature future state of crisis.

The ideological instrumental use, in the service of a "catch-up modernization" of the capitalistically lagging periphery of the world market (from the October Revolution to the so-called "liberation movements" in the Third World), has obscured this theoretical core entirely. Of course, this was not merely a matter of error within theory, but it reflected the course of real history: the characteristic of the twentieth century was indeed not the substantial crisis of the capitalist mode of production, but the crises of the historical unevenness which followed from the global disparity in capital-power and productivity within the system itself. It was, so to speak, the right of the historical laggards to use an oversimplified and crumbled Marx as a legitimating carrier of ideology in order to be able to eventually figure as independent participants in the bourgeois universe of the world market, capable of satisfying the consumption demands of their population. But this attempt inevitably was doomed to failure because of the criteria within the logic of the system, despite the widespread belief that it could be tamed through negotiation by the state. The breakdown of the planned state market systems left Western capitalism alone with itself. It has become a total, unipolar, globalized, and "simultaneonized" system, which has no more possibilities to fatten itself up ideologically through the externalised structures of its own historical unevenness. This opportunity was destroyed together with its supposed counter-system. Western capitalist self-justification had always thrived off of the deficits of the "catch-up modernization," which were compared to the stage of development of the most advanced capitalist countries (ideology of commodity consumption, campaign for human rights, etc.). Now capitalism has to give proof of its legitimacy by itself; and in this it fails miserably. Every year it is getting more implausible to blame the bygone systems for the relentlessly swelling wretchedness in the East and South and to misinterpret this misery as the mere load of heritage. Furthermore, it would be completely ridiculous to try to make the old evil enemy responsible for the increasing mass poverty and social degradation in the West. What is happening nowadays can only be the consequence of the wonderful, one and only capitalism.

This shady situation of society requires not only that we must not forget Marx, it now becomes necessary to discover his work in the first place and that we read his theory in a different light: as a theory of the development and crisis of the modern commodity-producing system (this term embraces logically Western capitalism and the state socialist systems of "catch-up modernization"). This reading of Marx, "against the grain" of the common interpretations, naturally requires two things. First, the historization of Marx's thought, i.e., the clearing of those elements in which he still thought within the horizon of bourgeois modernization. Secondly, such a reading requires to, so to speak, reverse the polarity of the Marxian Theory, so as to not understand it as a positivistic presentation of capitalist categories, but conversely, as their immanent radical critique. In other words, it is necessary to discover and overcome the contradictions within the Marxian Theory, which are due to the limited historical horizon of Marx's time. Reading Marx with a negative (instead of a positive) charge is the precondition for rendering his work explosive again.

THE MEANING OF THE LABOR THEORY OF VALUE

The term "labor" is a constitutive element for all modern societies in two respects, namely, in an economical-structural and in an ethical-moral sense. Enlightened liberalism secularized and integrated the Christian masochism of suffering. The Protestant work ethic thus found its place in Marxism as a bourgeois legacy. Similarly, the classics of bourgeois economics (and later, Marx) incorporated the positive Protestant category of labor in their theories. This was not merely a speculative theoretical postulate,

but rather the theoretical counterpart of the unfolding capitalist mode of production. In this historically limited conception, "labor" (i.e. the expenditure of human energy for the purpose of social (re)production) emerges as the substance of economic value. In turn, the discernible form of the substance of value is money (the selected "universal commodity"). That is, considered as objects of labor, commodities are objects that "contain" value and have money prices.

This is a positive and internalized connection, from the standpoint of bourgeois subjectivity. And in so far as Marx himself argues within an affirmative context of modernization, this "positivation" shows up in his work as well. When one reads the Marxian work in this sense, it turns out to be a descendant of liberal ideology and classical economics. This descendant kills its progenitor on the one hand, but still carries its birthmarks on the other. It is exactly this positivistic side of Marx which forms the "exoteric" Marx of the labor movement and class struggle. The emphasis on surplus-value as the capitalist form of "unpaid labor" and the implied, structurally determined "exploitation" of workers by capitalists, recommends somehow the need to claim "the entire value" for the "working class." By the same token, value and "labor" as categories of form and substance of capitalist society are "positivized" (made positive) into ontological, transhistorical conditions of human existence.

Social contradiction thus dissolves into subjective relations of intent, since the structural categories become a neutral, positive, ontological, and silent *a priori*. Consequently, it seems that the essence of capitalism is that one class is the subject of domination and oppresses another class – the "working class", which is the subject of labor – for the benefit of material wealth and well-being of the "ruling class". However, albeit fuzzy and inconsistent in its terms and presentation, the deeper dimension of the Marxian Theory implies a totally different interpretation. In this reading, "labor" suddenly no longer appears to be a positive substance but rather a negative one; and accordingly, value represents the form of a negative mode of social reproduction (Vergesellschaftung). The appearance of labor as the substance of value is real and objective, but it is real and objective only within the modern commodity-producing system. The practical activity of society within the "metabolism of nature" (Marx) has, in no other mode of production and mode of living, assumed the substantial status of the socially-general (all-embracing) abstraction of "labor" and dominated the whole process of reproduction in the form of value.

Within this system, money is the tangible form of the appearance of value, which is linked to itself. In the self-expanding movement of capital, which breeds money out of money, money becomes to a relentless and restless end-in-itself. But if "labor" is the substance of value, and thus the substance of money, one therefore has to describe labor too as an end-in-itself: it is the self-referring and permanent alienated expenditure (Entäußerung) of human energy. The mediating character of "labor" in the "metabolism with nature" and the mediating character of money in the social metabolism of society transformed into an end-in-itself and thus determine the actions of the empirical subjects. It is precisely this tautological, systemic self-reference that renders "labor" to "labor" and money to money. Marx calls this paradoxical and irrational achievement of independence of the means (or medium) the "automatic subject" of the modern age.

Far from being the subjects of the story, the owners of capital and, likewise, the managers, prove to be mere functionaries of the "automatic subject," which operates beyond their aims. Incidentally, the gratifications for the members of the so-called "ruling class" seem to be almost derisory in relation to the strains they experience, their "luxury" lags far behind that of all pre-modern elites, and, moreover, has become more and more stupid and scanty along capitalist development. This conception of the capitalist mode of production and mode of living strongly suggests the notion of (objectified) "utilization" of the capacity-for-labor, rather than the term of "exploitation" (subjectively perceived, and sociologically restricted). Wage-labor is not withheld directly from its own social product. Rather, the social production of wealth itself is subordinated to the systemic restrictions of the monstrous end-in-itself.

Following from the self-referentiality of the quasi-independent means ("labor") or medium (money), paradoxical "social relations between things" (Marx) arise wherein the humans interact not directly but remain primarily isolated from each other. Their social interaction only takes place secondarily via the value-property of the labor products. That is precisely what Marx called the fetishism of the commodity form. The use of the natural and social resources does not take place through the conscious mutual regulation by social institutions in advance, but through the blind expenditure of labor-energy for anonymous markets. This expenditure of abstract labor-energy can prove itself to be socially coherent only a posteriori, "behind the backs" of the acting subjects in a likewise blind, objectified, and systemically conformed manner. Social coherence is therefore never guaranteed (as is well known, Adam Smith acclaimed this point with the topos of the "invisible hand," despite the evident frictions of such blind social dynamics (Vergesellschaftung)).

With this fetishism, where the social dynamics appear to be dynamics between things (which is the essence of the "automatic subject"), a relation between form and substantial content is established that is both real and hallucinatory. The concrete human activity of transforming the elements of nature remains unsocial (a matter of "business administration"), although it is from the beginning not self-sufficient, but aimed at a context of universal and mutual dependency. The merely secondary social validation through the market necessitates two things: firstly, that productive activity is stripped of every concrete character, i.e., abstracted to pure "expenditure of human brains, nerves, and muscles" (Marx) in order to make the qualitatively different activities and goods commensurable in the exchange of commodities. Secondly, despite the fact that the real process has gone by, the abstracted expenditure of human-social energy now appears (in the particular quantification of the respective level of productivity) to be a social property and substance of the products and, in turn, this substance acquires its expression by the selected "universal commodity" (money) in the form of money price.

However, since money as money capital represents the all-embracing and self-referential element in the “valorization of value” (and to this extend it represents the point of departure), the concrete activity of the productive human relationship to nature takes place from the beginning merely with regard to the abstraction, which has literally become real in the property of value and money. Thus the reversal of means and end has its correspondence in the reversal of concrete and abstract; now the concretum is merely the expression of the abstractum, instead of the inverse. Hence, the so-called “concrete labor” and the correlated spectrum of the “use-values” represent not the “good”, need-oriented side of the system, but itself the mere concrete form of appearance of the real abstraction, because the concrete operation of production appears on the social level only as the medium of this abstraction. Concrete labor stands not for itself, but is subject to the dictates of the “valorization of value,” and, therefore, causes also irrational and destructive results on the level of use-value in spite of the better judgement of all participants, who remain fettered to the structural force of the system. Of course, the value-property of the products, which serve as carriers of the expended and abstract “labor-substance”, is hallucinatory. This is because, firstly, the aspect of abstract expenditure of human energy of the producing activity can not really be removed from the material-sensory character of “concrete labor”. This process takes place only in the “abstractifying” social unconsciousness as an implicit automatism, albeit producing a material result: money. It is through money that society encounters its own unconscious abstraction as an independent, alienated power. Secondly, since it is a matter of a living process, one can also not get hold of the producing activity as abstracted matter *sui generis* in “congealed” form in the products. The members of society who are socially isolated from each other, and are being mediated by the products *a posteriori*, must thus hallucinate their bygone respective “labor” as a property of the products (and, moreover, with respect to the systemic feedback, they must already start the respective activity of production under this abstract and hallucinatory reification). Only a human being who grew up with the categories of the commodity-producing society will recognize the hallucinatory property of value/price in the first place, for it cannot be grasped on the material level. However, this fetishistic hallucination is not an arbitrary and accidental one: the socially valid amount of labor fitting to the respective level of productivity must actually be expended. The capitalist end-in-itself gains firmness and the ability of reproduction only as a socially-hallucinatory relation of past, actually expended quota of labor (in concrete-sensory form).

The Marxian analysis of the capitalist deep structure, with its immanent fetishism, reveals the negative character of the labor-substance and its value-form. This crucial point has been ignored bashfully by the Marxism of the labor movement, and has been dismissed by the official economic science as “philosophical nonsense”. In the context of the rejection of the Marxian Theory, academic science even discarded the doctrine of the bourgeois classical economists, who regarded the expended amount of labor as the content of economic value. The dominant consciousness kept only the ethically repressive meaning and moral of the positive term of labor and thereby protected itself through ignorance against the discovery of their own irrational constitution, which lurks in the Marxian term of fetishism. Economics became the superficial theory of marginal utility, or the theory of subjective value. Within this theory – the foundation of today’s mainstream economics – the term of value is entirely dissolved into the appearance of price and, in turn, price is reduced to the purely subjective utility-calculations made by market participants (whose existence and constitution are assumed *a priori*). This post-classical theory does not really intend to and is not able to explain anything. Rather, its purpose is to bring the calculations of the market subjects into a systematic and computable form. Within the social sciences, mathematics appears on the scene at the point when the critical impulse has been lost and when one tries to bring the description of the social context, which lacks a theoretical explanation, back under control.

However, the proposition that price can be reduced to subjective calculations of utility and that it has nothing to do with some sort of an objective substance of value, is plausible only in unusual situations, outside the implicitly assumed social relations. For example, in the famous idea of the “glass of water in the desert,” whose marginal utility would rise to infinity. But examples of that sort are silly since they are not part of the ordinary performance of social-economic actions and can therefore not be considered to be the subject of economics. Within the real society of a commodity-producing system the explanatory power of the marginal utility calculations of use-values is practically zero. This is because, although market participants evidently weigh their subjective utility against the respective money price, they do not do this independent of social conditions; rather, they do this under objectified conditions, which are forced upon them and (*a priori*) influence their calculation in an unconscious manner. The theory of subjective value (price) confuses cause and effect here. Normally a certain good is disposable on a larger scale because the respective productivity has increased, i.e., the objective value of the single commodity (the expended amount of labor per good) has decreased through the diminution of its labor-substance. The subjective calculation of utility thus only follows, at best, the development of social productivity regarding the expenditure of labor.

However, the perception of smaller or greater utility in relationship to the level of human needs in no way regulates the production of goods. For instance, assume a growing mass of unemployed and recipients of welfare, people who are not able to buy certain desired and necessary goods: an increase in their subjective calculation of utility concerning these goods by no means causes a rise in prices of these goods; they are on the contrary more likely to fall, because demand decreased as a result of missing purchasing power, in spite of an increased social need. It is pure cynicism to attribute this fall in prices (consider a deflationary shock, for example) to a decline in marginal utility of the goods, due to a saturation of the corresponding needs. On the other hand, a lack of demand will not lead to any arbitrary decrease in prices below the objective labor-substance (according to the level of productivity), rather, it will precipitate a shut-down in production regardless of the unsatisfaction of (even vital) needs and an abundant capacity of production.

The theory of marginal utility, or the theory of subjective value, together with their various extensions in the twentieth century, wholly ignore that the capitalist order of society is not determined by the subjects of circulation, but by the irrational end-in-itself of production. The capitalist inversion of means and end, which Marx analysed, enforces firstly, that humans can in no way appear on the demand side of the goods markets without having previously sold their own skin in the labor market in the name of the systemic end-in-itself. Secondly, and following from this, the goods market is not at all the place where the calculations of use-value-utility made by independently producing subjects meet. Rather, the market, apparently being the place of the "freedom" of buying and selling, represents nothing but the sphere of the "realization of surplus-value," i.e., the reconversion of the expended quota of labor into the form of money capital. The goods market is in this respect only a pass-through for the ceaseless pulsating capitalist end-in-itself, and is far from being constituted by a sum of subjective calculations of utility. The exact opposite is the case: these calculations of utility are bound to the realm of the pre-existing capitalistic law of the system. The term of utility itself is determined by that, not by the sense of well-being and the satisfaction of needs of the market participants.

THE TENDENCY OF THE RATE OF PROFIT TO FALL AND THE LAW OF BREAKDOWN OF CAPITAL

It is quite obvious what drives the ideologists of economics in their denial of the objective labor-substance: the problem of substance must be disposed of because capitalism has the immanent tendency to make this substance superfluous and obsolete, and by doing so, destroy itself. From the point of view of a consciousness that is only able and willing to think within the bourgeois categories of form (circulation, commodity exchange, and its "relationalities") the pure form remains and has to be eternalized, in whatever pseudo-emancipatory illusions. The substantial content is veiled ideologically in order to avoid the recognition of the catastrophic potential of its actual dissolution (and hence the inevitable obsolescence of commodity exchange and its forms of consciousness). It is nothing but the strongly acclaimed mechanism of competition that drives the capitalist dynamic and expresses the immanent systemic contradiction through which capitalism ruins its own fetishistic substance. This competition among isolated businesses, which is brought about by the mediation of anonymous markets, necessitates a permanent increase in productivity, which, in turn, can only be obtained by the substitution of "scientific-technical agencies" (Marx) for human labor. This means that the single commodity constantly loses value because it represents less and less "labor-substance." Thus one can extrapolate an absolute endpoint whereupon the entire social labor-substance is at such a marginal quantitative level that the hallucinated value-property of the products degenerates and becomes absurd.

In the past, the capitalist mode of production was only able to reproduce itself by means of a steady expansion, and in this, temporarily solving its logical inner contradiction. The less value (i.e., labor-substance) a single commodity could represent, the more commodities had to be produced and sold. The breakdown of the system was deferred as long as the quantity of produced goods expanded more rapidly than the labor-substance per commodity decreased. Consequently, it was necessary to stuff the world with commodities and to condition people to organize their lives in the form of a ceaseless production of commodities and a steadily increasing consumption of commodities. However, the capitalist development was all but smooth. On the contrary, within the horizon of the history of capitalist prevalence the expansionary development faced serious stoppages; but each time it was able to get under again.

That is precisely the level where the famous Marxian "law of the falling rate of profit" is located. The rate of profit is the ratio of business profit to capital advanced. At the end of one turnover of an individual capital all costs must be covered and, additionally, a surplus has to be obtained. Capital advanced consists of two different components: costs of constant capital (structures, machines, raw material) and costs of variable capital (i.e., wages). The value of the constant capital is only reproduced in the process of production. Expressed in terms of the fetishistic hallucination, the substance of value is, so to speak, transferred to the products (e.g., through the wear and tear of machines used for production). Hence, surplus value can only stem from the share of living labor, which creates additional substance of value above its own reproduction requirements, and in doing so, nourishes the social machine.

But as the substance of value in a single commodity decreases with the substitution of scientific-technical units for workers, the rate of profit of an individual capital logically falls by the very same process: the share of those "dead" components, which are merely reproduced and which do not create an additional substance of value, steadily increases; and the share of capital laid out for "living labor" (wages), which is the sole source of surplus-value, decreases accordingly; hence the ratio of profit to total capital advanced necessarily has to decrease too. In other words, an ever-larger amount of capital is necessary to obtain the same profit.

However, as the term indicates, the "tendency of the rate of profit to fall" is merely a relative concept and does therefore in no way – like it is often falsely assumed – provide the argument for an absolute barrier of the capitalist mode of production. The decreasing rate of profit is only a way in which the capitalist self-contradiction expresses itself in the compensating expansionary movement. The diminution in the substance of value of a single commodity is compensated (and over-compensated) by the production of additional commodities. In the end, more substance of value is produced than in the previous period (i.e., the mass of profit rises). In other words, the fall in the rate of profit is compensated (and over-compensated) by investing additional money capital to such an extent that the increased capital yields a higher mass of profit, despite the decline in the rate of profit. Hence the (relative) rate of profit can fall, but the (absolute) mass of profit can nevertheless increase.

This merely relative character of the fall in the rate of profit also shows up in the “counter-acting tendencies” that Marx noted, the reduction in the value of the so-called “constant capital” (i.e., the “dead” capital in the form of means of production) being the most important one. If the increase in productivity within the production of the means of production (e.g., capital goods) exceeds the average increase in productivity, then the goods of constant capital will cheapen faster than the diminution in the ratio of workers employed per amount of capital. Consequently, the decline in the rate of profit can come to a halt or can even be reversed (rising rate of profit), in spite of the increasing ratio of the “material-technical mass” of constant capital to the profitably applicable workers. But since capitalist categories always refer to the real abstraction of the substance of value, the only thing that is of importance is their relative magnitudes. Hence, if a faster price-reduction in constant capital can stop the fall in the rate of profit, it is at the same time part of the reduction of a single commodities’ substance of value, because this reduction is valid in the production of consumption goods as well as in the production of the means of production.

What happens in a crisis is not primarily an intensified fall in the rate of profit, but above all a fall in the absolute mass of profit, which means that the compensating expansionary movement and hence production itself comes to a halt on a large, social scale. The relative aspect of these crises is that they are temporarily limited and relate to a particular constellation of capitalist development, the latter not yet having reached its final state. Marx foresaw the abstract possibility (and, in the *Grundrisse*, the logical endpoint) of a hopeless constellation, within which the compensating expansionary movement cannot get under again; the absolute mass of profit falls without limit, and the majority of people are put out of the running. This is because at a certain stage of the scientification of production (which includes a degree of substitution of technical units for workers) the underlying production of “substance of value” is not feasible anymore on a socially substantial scale.

At this point the degeneration of the substance of value is transformed from a relative (fall in the rate of profit) into an absolute (fall in the mass of profit) status, which becomes apparent by a broad shut-down of production and persistent large-scale unemployment. If the capitalist form-relations of general commodity exchange, labor market, and “earning a living/making money” are maintained, then the absurd situation of an impoverishing society would evolve, in spite of the fact that all material factors necessary for the production of wealth are disposable to an even superabundant extent.

Nowadays, the Third Industrial Revolution (microelectronics) is pushing forward towards this absurdity with rapid strides. What Marx had grasped only as an abstract, and remotely distant “finite logic” appears in social reality in the shape of the new potentials for rationalization and automatization, which begin to take effect after a long period of incubation (the first debates on this issue took place in the 1950s and 60s), although they are not exploited for a long time yet. The structural mass unemployment (other typical phenomena are dumping-wages, social welfare, people living in dumps, and related forms of destitution) indicates that the compensating historical expansionary movement of capital has come to a standstill.

The reason why this standstill appears only on the social level (and not as an implosion of the mass of profit) – that is to say, the reason why the illusion emerges that capital accumulation is possible without a corresponding labor-substance – is because expanded reproduction in the real economy (i.e., production and sale of goods under the expenditure of socially valid labor), which has ceased to keep going, can be simulated by the credit system and by the disconnection of the speculative financial markets for some period of time. Credit (i.e., the mass of the savings of society which are collected by the banking system and lent for the purpose of production or consumption in exchange for interest payments) is quite a normal capitalist phenomenon, but its importance has grown as the capitalist expansionary development accelerated. Credit implies the usage of future money revenue (and, hence, of a future employment of workers and the future creation of substance of value) in order to maintain the present operation. The development of credit since the beginning of the 20th century, and likewise the “un-substantiation” of money through the disconnection from the real substance of value (i.e., the end of the gold standard), already indicated the immanent barrier of the process of valorization, which comes to the surface today.

The compensating expansion, and thus the steady increase in the mass of profit (usually alongside a falling rate of profit), could nevertheless continue as long as the corresponding future money revenues were really obtained on the basis of the real substance of value (including payments of interest). But this was made and is being made increasingly impossible by the Third Industrial Revolution. As a consequence, the run into credit becomes stronger and a more and more common phenomenon. However, the crash into a general financial crisis must then be the more abrupt and grave if the real substance of value can not be obtained. The financing of state consumption by debt has already arrived (on a world-scale) at the limit of simulative reproduction; but also private mass consumption financed by debt and the pillage of savings, inheritances, etc., for the purpose of consumption, the reduction of hidden reserves within firms, the steady decline in the equity base – and, above all, the creation of “fictitious capital” through the unparalleled skyrocketing of share prices (in relation to the growth of the real economy) – show that the simulated perpetuation of the capitalist expansion starts to reach its limits.

The grotesque illusion of an eternally processing form without substantial content, which arose in the ongoing epoch of “casino capitalism” and “life on tick,” could indeed assume the appearances of plausibility. But this plausibility comes only because the breakdown of the disconnected, unsubstantial financial superstructure materializes only after a certain period of incubation. The maturities of the credit system range between one day and several years or decades. In addition, debts can temporarily be restructured. And, the bubble of the seemingly limitless swelling of stock values needs an external trigger to face its inevitable burst. However, as the realization of the imminent “devaluation of value” proceeds the fetishistic end-in-itself of the entire mode of

production is disclosed – and history reveals the ridiculousness of the current theoretical reflection and common sense thinking, as well, and their “relational” forms of the all-embracing commodity exchange.

UTOPIA AND PLANNED ECONOMY

It is no accident that the positivistic, historic labor movement did not strive to free the production of wealth from the restrictive (and in its consequences, absurd) “labor” and its value-form. Far from it, the Labor Movement wanted the putative “liberation” of the fetishistic substance itself (“liberation of labor”) and “just participation” in the gains of the irrational expenditure of human energy. This major social movement thereby became unintentionally the promoter of the capitalist mode of production: it promoted the advancement and generalization of the then undeveloped capital relation against the resistance of its narrow-minded representatives. Thus the Marxian “Class Struggle” turned out to be an immanent form of movement of capitalism itself and not its transcending movement of abolition (*Aufhebung*) (as Marx thought).

The labor movement became the subject, and at the same time, the idiot, of the modern commodity-fetishistic system. It “positivized” the abstract labor-substance, the general value-form of social reproduction, and the other structural categories of the capitalist society, appropriated them, and blew them up into ontological human conditions of existence. Just as with labor market, money-wage, and commodity exchange, other bourgeois institutions – like the state machine (abstract administration of humans), nation, economics, business administration, secret service, immediate family, automobilization, etc. – were adopted and equipped with a “socialist” charge. Characters like Blair, Schröder, Clement, or, on the other side of the world, Gorbatschow, Jelzin and co., represent nothing but the final stage of this historic misunderstanding. From this immanent point of view the notion of crisis could not be broadened theoretically to an absolute, hopeless decline of the substantial production of “value,” because then the whole construct of the positivistic self-conception would have been obsolete. The labor-moved ideology was downright naively optimistic with respect to the perpetuation of the labor-substance, considering the latter to take even socialism far into the future.

This reduced conception of capitalism necessarily influenced the imaginations about a post-capitalist society. Marx rarely disclosed his opinion that labor-substance and value-form must disappear together with the abolition of the social fetishism. Apart from that, he insists more or less throughout his entire work on a substantial ontology of “labor” – in particular, with respect to socialism. The abolition of the fetish-form remains relatively obscure, vaguely expressed in the idea of an “association of free humans”. The labor movement, eventually, totally abandoned the latter idea. It fell back into the social form-unconsciousness and took the role of an agent for modernization. Socialism was reduced to the idea of state-planned social quota of labor. The putative social planning “in advance” thus paradoxically referred to the fetish-category of a social process “a posteriori.” It was precisely for that reason that a modern state bureaucracy had to execute the planning of the process of production. But in the Marxian Theory, the state machine is by definition considered to be an entity apart from society, which therefore can only function as an instrument for the extrinsic administration of humans – in the name of the presupposed capitalist end in itself, and not as an institution of a conscious social regulation.

In this sense, the programmatic conception of socialism of the Western Social Democrats, as well as the actual practice of the Eastern socialist states, were poor “utopias of labor”, i.e., the paradoxical phenomena of a “land of nowhere,” stemming from the paradoxical process of modernization. In this “land of nowhere,” the unaffected fetishism of the labor-substance as an end-in-itself and the value-form were considered not only to yield the liberation from the absurd capitalist restrictions of the production of wealth, but also to bring about a sort of paradisaical final state of history. The metaphysical over-stressing of the end was a necessary result of the presentiment of self-deception, which was always lurking within this labor-utopian imaginary world. As far as the attempt to realize this “land of nowhere” was made, it had either to assume forms of state-terrorism and to fail in the end, or it had to lead directly (as in the case of Western social democracy) to the integration into the existing capitalist state and administrative machine.

In particular, the allegedly most radical ideas of this history were trapped within the appearances of the capitalist surface and hence had to make absolute the underlying categories, which formed the other respective pole of the same negative social dynamics (*Vergesellschaftung*). But in reality, this was because they were not radical enough. Above all, the abrupt idea of an “abolition of money” (an occasionally occurring, superficial radicalism) could only appear as the destruction of a mediating moment in the context of the un-abolished (unaufgehoben) fetishistic movement of the substance; the latter then only being possible in the form of an immediate state-terrorism. In that sense, the infamous terrorist regime of Pol Pot has to be regarded as an aberration of a “catch-up modernization” dictatorship, rather than a failed attempt to overcome the commodity-producing system. An emancipatory “abolition of money” is only possible in the context of an abolition of the labor-substance, its value-form, and the complementary, socially extrinsic state machine. It is certainly not the “esoteric,” anti-fetishistic Marx who, so to speak, became real in Pol Pot, and therefore should sharply be condemned with all expressions of disgust. On the contrary, it is exactly this Marx who considers the abolition (*Aufhebung*) of the commodity-form (and, by implication, the abolition of money as a medium and end-in-itself) not only to be identical with an obsolescence of abstract “labor,” but also with a “reintegration of the state into society.” The Marxian Theory (read in a non-positivist way) identifies money and the state as the two poles of the negative abstract generality within a society that does not possess awareness and power over itself, because the means and end of reproduction (abstractum and concretum) have assumed an inverse relationship.

An attempt to use the state to suspend the movement of money (instead of an emancipatory abolition (Aufhebung) of the negative totality) inevitably breeds a social and moral catastrophe, as well as the converse conception of the "absolutization" of money over the regulation by the state. Unfortunately, it is the current neo-liberal consensus of the global elite that makes a mirror-image-like attempt of Pol Pot. Bureaucratic forced labor for people on welfare, restrictions in medical treatment, and skinhead-raids on homes for handicapped are "Pol-Pot-trace-elements" in the Western-democratic societies, as well as the rampant pragmatistic hate against intellectual reflection. It is the rage of the "subjectless" unleashed money that, along the increasing hopelessness of the labor society crisis, threatens to force the liberal-democratic Western regimes to build mass graves, like the mentioned turned-wild totalitarian state regime did in East Asia.

The current, poor Keynesian nostalgia in Europe cannot comprehend the historic menace because Keynesianism is itself the pale reflection of a pale reflection of a positivistic Labor-Marxism, which itself has been pale from the beginning. It nevertheless suspects the threat, and hence wants to rebalance the two poles of the negative social dynamics (Vergesellschaftung) on the almost imploringly conjured ground of the labor-substance. But when this substance irrevocably declines – and therefore the two poles of abstract generality (money and state) cannot sustain social reproduction anymore – so too does it no longer make sense to demand "alliances for labor" and a "return to state regulation" (e.g., in German politics).

The inescapable historical task is the negation of the negative mode of social reproduction (Vergesellschaftung) itself, i.e., the liberation of the production of wealth from the restrictions of the modern commodity-producing system. Under the conditions of the Third Industrial Revolution, the planning of "quota of labor" has become obsolete and senseless, as well as the distribution according to "quota of performance" ("abstractified" energy) expended by the isolated labor-individuals (i.e., according to the actual or alleged contribution to the social mass of substance). The degree of social interdependency has reached a level where it is neither possible to assign "performance" to individuals, nor is this of any significance. Rather, what matters now is the sensible handling of the scientific-technical units and their planned employment. A conscious social communication, in this sense, is neither feasible within the fetish-form of value, nor by means of a bureaucratic state machine, but only beyond state and market through decisions about the flow of resources "in advance" and with participation of all members of society. The development of the productive forces made the necessary social fund of time abundantly available, but under the conditions of a commodity producing system that can only occur in negative form as "mass unemployment."

Marxian Communism remains the spectre of radical critique for the capitalist mode of production. But this spectre is doomed to be harmless as long as the Marxian Theory is understood in the old, obsolete reading of the positive Labor-Marxism. The objectified law of the breakdown of the fetishistic substance fulfils itself with or without critique. In the latter case, of course, also without hope.

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